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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces topics about the American West to teachers and students of U.S. history and suggests that interested students can pursue the topics at greater length. The report is based on information from the novelist, Tony Hillerman, who states in "The Best of the West" (1991) that there are many firsthand accounts and other texts of historical value and significance including diaries, news dispatches, travelogues, memoirs, letters, government reports, and stone inscriptions that are from and about the American West. The paper offers titles to resources referred to in Hillerman's book and provides short descriptions about their relevancy to the western experience. Topics discussed in the paper are: (1) "Early Exploration"; (2) "The Early Frontier"; (3) "The Hispanic Influence"; (4) "Frontier Life"; (5) "Cowboy Culture"; (6) "Character References"; (7) "Western Mining"; (8) "The Western Women"; (9) "Western Justice"; (10) "Western Transportation"; and (11) "The United States Military." (Contains 73 references.) (BT)

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CHRONICLES OF THE AMERICAN WEST

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CHRONICLES OF THE AMERICAN WEST

Tony Hillerman, best known for his novels about the Navajo and for his other works of nonfiction about the West, states in The Best of the West (1991) that there are many firsthand accounts and other texts of historical value and significance from and about the American West. There are diaries, news dispatches, travelogues, memoirs, letters, government reports, and stone inscriptions to name but a few examples. Many of these texts are a social history of the people of the West. Offered below are the titles to some of the many resources referred to in the Hillerman book. A short description of some aspect of their relevancy to the western experience is included. The purpose is to introduce a series of topics to the teachers and students of American history. Interested students can pursue the topics at greater length in some other manner. Papers and projects are a possibility.

EARLY EXPLORATION

The discovery of the rune stones with their Scandinavian inscriptions make it less likely that Columbus was the first visitor to America. Another stone, found in 1850 in an area just west of Los Lunas, New Mexico, makes it less likely that the Norsemen were the first visitors to America. Dixie L. Perkins (1979) writes about the discovery in The Meaning of the New Mexico Mystery Stone. She believes that a Greek sailor left the message in about 500 B.C. The sailor states that he is fleeing, afraid, and near death from starvation. In 1805, the Lewis and Clark expedition reached the Pacific Ocean. They spent the winter months on the Columbia River

preparing to return home in the early spring of 1806. But if they died en route, then the government would need to know something of their fate. Accordingly, Meriwether Lewis delivered a one-paragraph message to the local Indians with the request that they deliver the message to any white man or woman in the area. The captain of the Lydia carried the message to Canton, China, where an American forwarded it on to a friend in Philadelphia. The Lewis and Clark expedition is documented in the History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark: To the Sources of the Missouri, Across the Rocky Mountains, Down the Columbia River to the Pacific in 1804-6 (Lewis 1902).

Experts have verified the authenticity of the message found in 1887 on the Thoen Stone. Frank Thomson (1969) in The Thoen Stone: A Saga of the Black Hills describes the message and the circumstances surrounding the fate of the men who died trying to haul all of the gold that they could carry out of the Black Hills of the Dakota territory in 1834. In 1869, the one-armed adventurer, John Wesley Powell, floated the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon for the federal government. His description of the spectacle is in his Canyons of the Colorado (Powell 1895). Built just outside of Tucson, Arizona, during the late 1700s, the San Xavier del Bac Mission is an exemplar of mission architecture in the United States. Spanish commandant Captain Jose Zuniga mentions it in his 1804 Report by Zuniga (McCarty 1977).

THE EARLY FRONTIER

In 1808, Blackfeet warriors captured mountain man John Colter in the Wyoming-Montana territory. They gave him the chance to run for his life. He survived. H. M. Chittenden (1895) describes the story in The Yellowstone National Park: Historical and Descriptive. Members of the Shoshone, Bannock, and Paiute tribes gathered at Pyramid Lake, Nevada, in 1860, to hear the young Paiute leader Numaga plead for peace with the whites. The event that had brought the group together was the kidnapping of a young Indian girl by white prospectors. Toward the end

of Numaga's speech, news arrived that a band of Paiutes had rescued the girl and killed the prospectors. Numaga prophesied the coming of the white soldiers. Soon after, federal troops attacked in what became known as the Pyramid Valley War. Myron Angel (1992) describes the interviews that he had with the Paiutes present at the meeting in his History of Nevada. The efforts of the Indians to save their homelands from the Army and white settlers produced many instances of greatness on the battlefield. The Apaches and Kiowa-Comanches were especially well led. Most notable, though, was the leadership of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce. But even his genius could not save the Nez Perce from defeat at Snake Creek, Montana, on October 5, 1877. The "Surrender of Joseph" in the November 17, 1877 issue of Harper's Weekly describes the scene as the few surviving Nez Perce turn over their weapons.

In 1862, General James H. Carleton was the commanding officer of a military post in New Mexico territory. Convinced that the homelands of the Navajos and Jicarilla Apaches were rich in gold, he decided to remove the Indians to a desolate reservation in eastern New Mexico. He called in Kit Carson to carry out the plan. Carson's thousand-man army and scorched-earth campaign got results. Thousands, freezing from the cold and desperate from hunger, surrendered. In "The Long Walk," those too weak to walk were shot. Many others died or were kidnapped by slave dealers interested in the four hundred dollars that a Navajo child could bring at auction. Raymond Friday Locke (1992) describes "The Long Walk" in The Book of the Navajo. In Son of Old Man Hat, A Navajo Autobiography, Walter Dyk records the recollections of Left Handed (1970). Included are Left Handed's memories of the death and funeral of his father. In keeping with the traditional Navajo shaman religion, several horses are faced to the north and shot. Also noted is the lack of emphasis that the shaman religion puts on life after death.

THE HISPANIC INFLUENCE

Roughly cut cart roads once crisscrossed and connected the area of the Spanish empire that

is now New Mexico to its sources of supplies. Mules pulled carts, sometimes in caravans of fifty carts to a team, to their destination. Max Morehead (1995) writes about the culture of the men who handled the teams in New Mexico's Royal Road. A religious sect of the laity called the Brothers of the Light kept the Catholic faith alive in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado during a time when the people on the northern fringe of the Spanish empire were being distanced from the Church by isolation and a lack of clergy. Marta Weigle (1989) writes about the Brothers' lenten habits of penitence and flagellation, their political influence, and their reaction to the hostilities of Protestant Americans in Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood.

In many areas of the early Southwest, it was common practice for the people of a village to bring their animals to the local church to be blessed. Folklorist John A. Lomax describes the practice in Southwesterners Write (Pearce 1947). Helen Hunt Jackson's Ramona (1988) was instrumental in the development of the Ramona or California style of architecture found throughout the Southwest today. Jackson describes homes with white plastered arches and red tile roofs.

FRONTIER LIFE

In 1867, the social elite of Virginia City, Nevada, decided to celebrate the Christmas season with a grand ball. Alexander Kelly McClure (1975) describes the gala in his Three Thousand Miles Through the Rocky Mountains. Easterner John Wesley Clampitt was three thousand miles away from home supervising postal workers in Utah when Christmas Eve arrived in 1867. His recollections of the evening are recorded in his Echoes From the Rocky Mountains (Clampitt 1983). In The Sod-House Frontier, Everett Dick (1989) explains why most of the settlers on the western prairie used sod. There was little choice. Trees for lumber were nonexistent and most settlers lacked the knowledge needed to make adobe bricks. Gnarled by a grizzly bear protecting her cubs and left for dead by fellow trappers, mountain man Hugh Glass walked, crawled, and dragged himself three hundred miles to safety. Fur trapper George Yount (1966) describes the

attack and the aftermath in George C. Yount and His Chronicles of the West.

During the 1820s, Jacob Fowler lived in the Taos, New Mexico, area and worked as a local trader and trapper. In the Journal of Jacob Fowler, a not too literate Fowler (1975) describes how a black friend dealt with the sexual overtures of a Spanish woman and how the locals used one bed to accommodate six people. During the 1890s, water and the windmills for pumping it were a necessity for survival in the Ozona region of Texas. When drillers sank deeper shafts, they struck oil and Ozona became the wealthiest small town in America. Alan Bosworth (1964) describes the chain of events and the opening of the Ozona oilfield in his Ozona Country. In 1833, William Shepherd arrived in California from Great Britain. He bought a few thousand sheep and herded them to Montana. He writes about his experiences in Prairie Experiences in Handling Cattle and Sheep (Shepherd 1983). In 1902, the not yet thirty-year-old J. C. Penney opened his first store, the Golden Rule, in Kemmerer, Wyoming. He was a newly married man with several hundred dollars in savings and a two thousand dollar debt. Norman Beasley (1950) describes the early days in Main Street Merchant.

The shanty towns of the West that brought foreign workers to the mining operations were all basically the same in every aspect of their existence. Robert Laxalt (1991) describes the life of copper miners in a town in Nevada in Nevada, A Bicentennial History. In the 1860s, Alexander Toponce was a self-employed wagon freighter between towns in Colorado and Montana. He describes trading nails and whiskey along the trail for almost anything in Reminiscences of Alexander Toponce (1971). In 1884, thirteen-year-old Walter Scott carried water for a party of surveyors in Death Valley. In Death Valley Scotty Told Me, Eleanor Jordan Houston (1985) describes the discovery of borax and the use of twenty-mule teams to haul it out. In 1850, Thaddeus Culbertson, a graduate of the eastern Ivy League schools, docked on the banks of the upper Missouri River at Fort Pierre, an American Fur Company trading post. Culbertson's Journal of An Expedition to the Mauvaises Terres and the Upper Missouri in 1850 describes the

fort and the burial customs of the indigenous people (Culbertson 1986). After a period of time, Culbertson returned to the East where he died of an "all too common disease."

COWBOY CULTURE

In 1882, Richard Trimble traveled to Cheyenne, Wyoming, to visit a friend. He was twenty-five and a recent graduate of Harvard College. A letter home, which can be found in Michael S. Kennedy's Cowboys and Cattlemen, recounts the experience (Kennedy 1964). At age twelve, Charlie Siringo became a Texas cowboy. Twenty years later, he wrote A Texas Cowboy, one of the first cowboy autobiographies to appear in print (Siringo 1991). A second autobiography Baughman, The Oklahoma Scout chronicles the life of Theodore Baughman, Union soldier, Kansas cattleman, and Army scout during the Indian wars (Baughman 1886). In 1883, cowboys called their first strike over wages and working conditions. Negotiations occurred between the Texas cattlemen and the cowboys, but within a few weeks, it was all over. The influx of other cowboys looking for work made it easy for the cattlemen to hold out. David Dary (1989) writes about the strike in Cowboy Culture.

Rodeo is a Spanish word meaning to collect or to encircle. In its origin, a rodeo was a gathering of livestock made so that area ranchers could pick out their own already branded animals. Charles Nordhoff (1872) describes the early rodeos in his California: For Health, Pleasure, and Residence. At the turn of the century, Eugene Manlove Rhodes was still working as a hired hand on ranches throughout the West. His knowledge of the cowboy's way of life is evident in his description of chuck wagon amenities. He writes about his experiences in The Rhodes Reader, a bound volume of his works (Rhodes 1975).

CHARACTER REFERENCES

A Norwegian by birth, Snowshoe Thompson had come to the California and Nevada

borderlands to participate in the gold and silver rushes of the 1800s. Instead, he became a legendary mail carrier. His five-day, two-hundred-mile route over the Sierra Nevada took him from Genoa in western Nevada to Placerville in California and back again. During the winter months, snow was a problem. To cope, Thompson fashioned his own so-called Norwegian snowshoes. Worn on each foot, these were planks of fir, ten feet long, five inches wide, and two inches thick at their midpoint. Robert Laxalt (1991) writes about the Norwegian mail carrier and the introduction of the ski to snow country in Nevada, A Bicentennial History. Sometime during the late 1860s, John W. (Jack) Swilling founded Phoenix, Arizona. In a previous time, he had been an opportunist willing to serve either the Union or the Confederacy for the right amount of cash, an Indian hunter, and a highwayman, but now, he wanted to settle down. At the juncture of the Salt River where Phoenix and Tempe meet, he and several partners inaugurated the Swilling irrigation canal company. Soon the town had thirty farmers. It needed a name. Some preferred Pumpkinsville. Others suggested Stonewall (Jackson). Prospector Darrel Duppa, a well-educated English wanderer, born in France, and of minor nobility, chose the mythical phoenix rising from the ashes. Lawrence Clark Powell (1990) describes the early days of Phoenix in Arizona: A History.

In the late 1860s, Richens Lacy (Uncle Dick) Wootton opened a tollgate and wagon road along the Santa Fe Trail at Raton Pass, not far from Trinidad, Colorado. Travelers had always feared the pass. Its steep curves were strewn with the carcasses of dead animals and the skeletons of broken wagons. Wootton's charges were twenty-five cents a rider on horseback, ten cents a person on foot, five cents a head for livestock, and a dollar or more for wagons. Wootton used the money to keep the road open and in repair. Agnes Morley Cleaveland (1952) writes about the impact of Wootton's personality on the area in her Satan's Paradise. Gold, silver, and other metals worth close to a billion dollars poured out of the Comstock Lode of Nevada during the second half of the 1800s. Its purest deposits were at Virginia City. As a consequence, the Comstock Lode and Virginia City became the mecca for all kinds of fortune seekers. In turn, they produced their

share of millionaires and madames. In 1860, Julia Bulette became Virginia City's first madame. R. D. Miller (1964) describes the early days in Shady Ladies of the West.

WESTERN MINING

Many treasure seekers went west on the basis of some story that they had read in a magazine or in a newspaper about how precious metals were just lying in wait along the river washes and on the ground and in the mountains. In reality, the mineral wealth was hidden and when found had to be taken out of the earth through brute strength and hard work. Paul Horgan (1991) writes about Creede, Colorado, and Socorro, New Mexico, in The Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History. In January 1848, James W. Marshall discovered gold in California. His account of the Great Gold Rush is in Sketches of Early California (DeNevi 1971). J. Ross Browne was a professional writer, painter, politician, and adventurer. Before Virginia City, Nevada, became the wealthiest of the mining towns, Browne described it, in a letter to his wife, as a place where men lived like coyotes. It was set high on the slopes of a mountain and consisted of "several hundred tents, holes in the ground for shelter, frame shanties, and mud hovels." His book A Peep at Washoe: Sketches of Virginia City, Nevada Territory is a summation of his observations (Browne 1986).

The earliest of the mining operations in the Virginia City area of the Comstock Lode used vertical shafts dug down from the mountain tops and lifts to bring the ore out. Adolph Sutro, a Jewish tobacco worker from San Francisco, proposed tunneling laterally into the sides of the mountains. In this manner, gravity could do what it does best. The details of the proposal and their implementation are outlined in the Legends of the Comstock Lode (Beebe and Gleeg 1954). John Taylor Waldorf was just a youngster when he was brought to the mining camps of Virginia City. He was three when he arrived and sixteen when he left. In A Kid on the Comstock, he describes the humor and the horrors of the miner's life (Waldorf 1991). By 1865, twenty

thousand prospectors were living in the mountains of Montana. In Then and Now Robert Vaughn (1900) reminiscences on the rumors of gold and on the stampedes that followed. In 1872, two miners looking for a "loan" stood at the desk of William C. Ralston, a San Francisco banker. The miners made vague references to a jewel mine. With the showing of a bag, full of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires, Ralston was sold. He lost more than a half million dollars in the swindle. Randall Henderson (1961) describes the hoax in On Desert Trails: Today and Yesterday.

THE WESTERN WOMEN

Nannie Alderson's upbringing had been that of a Southern lady. In 1883, she moved to a remote cattle ranch in the wilds of Montana, where whether or not the place had an outhouse was uppermost in her mind. She describes her introduction to ranching in A Bride Goes West (Alderson 1971). In 1845, Susan Shelby Magoffin was eighteen, a newlywed, the daughter of a wealthy eastern family, and one of the first women to travel the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico. She describes wrangling livestock with cuss words in Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico (Magoffin 1988). In 1847, the federal government asked William Gilpin and the state of Missouri to raise a makeshift battalion of Missouri volunteers to fend off Indian attacks. A Lieutenant Amandus Schnabel, wanting the company of a woman, enlisted a female who traveled incognito with the troops. When the young private became pregnant, Gilpin court-martialed the lieutenant for depriving the United States of the services of a respected soldier. T. F. Karnes (1970) writes about the pregnant private in William Gilpin, Western Nationalist.

Caroline Nichols Churchill began teaching children when she was just fourteen. Later she became a professional writer and the owner of a Colorado newspaper. In 1879, she founded The Queen Bee, an early women's magazine. No stranger to the use of guns, she put three shots into her hotel room door one evening in Georgetown, Colorado, when it became apparent that the two men on the other side of it needed to be persuaded that the room was hers. She describes her

experiences in "Little Sheaves" (Churchill 1875). Annie D. Tallent was one of the first white women to travel in the Black Hills of the Dakotas. As part of an expedition into the homelands of the Sioux, she and the others were after gold. She describes wagon-train cooking in her memoirs, The First White Woman in the Black Hills (Tallent 1923). For breakfast, hot biscuits, fried bacon, and black coffee filled the bill. For lunch, cold biscuits, cold baked beans, and black coffee sufficed. But for supper, they "splurged." It was black coffee, hot biscuits, and warmed over baked beans.

In 1873, world traveler Isabella Bird traveled east by Pullman car from the Truckee Valley of California. She describes the trip, her Pullman car, its hair mattress, and the scenery in A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains (Bird 1985). Ellen Jack (1910) describes herself as a docile childlike newlywed in her memoirs, The Fate of a Fairy. In fact, she was a hands-on rancher, facile with "axe, pistol, or shotgun." Anne Ellis was a prosperous boomtown woman, public official, and devoted wife. In her memoirs, The Life of a Ordinary Woman, she describes the side entrances to the winerooms of the saloons in Goldfield, Nevada, where women could go to drink and to lay bets (Ellis 1990).

WESTERN JUSTICE

In 1884, Elfego Baca was a young Hispanic cowboy. When he tried to bring the law to one small town, he almost lost his life. Both sides exchanged more than four thousand rounds of fire within a thirty-six hour period. Baca went on to become a peace officer, lawyer, and well-known politician. V. B. Beckett (1962) describes the gunfight in Baca's Battle. In 1880, lawmen captured Billy the Kid and three of his cohorts. On their way to Santa Fe, they stopped in Las Vegas, New Mexico, to give interviews and to get some rest. Newspapers described Billy as about five feet nine inches tall and of slight build. He had a boyish appearance, bright blue eyes, and light hair and complexion. In all, he was a singularly handsome man. His only flaws were

his two protruding front teeth. Howard Bryan (1991) describes the real Kid in Wildest of the Wild West. In 1880, in Tucson, Arizona, an unarmed William Beattie took five rounds to the chest from a pistol. Because Beattie had had the reputation for being difficult, the killer, a local businessman, was never arrested. Thompson M. Turner (1969) describes the incident in The Latest From Arizona: The Hesperian Letters.

In 1871, in Mesilla, New Mexico, trouble came to the supporters of the two opposing political parties, the Republicans and the Democrats. Blows were struck between the two opposing candidates for political office and the fighting became general. Nine men were killed and forty wounded in the fight. A judge was sent for, but no indictments were ever returned. Ralph Emerson Twitchell (1917) describes the fracas in The Leading Facts of New Mexican History. In the 1880s, in Las Vegas, New Mexico, vigilante mobs used a windpowered water pump adjoining the jail to dispense justice. In one incident, a mob of a hundred citizens took the killers of the town's marshal out to the windmill to be hanged. The trap doors were about to be sprung when the marshal's widow opened up with her own brand of justice. Howard Bryan (1991) describes the bloodshed in his Wildest of the Wild West. The Lincoln County and American Valley wars were fought over the rights of the various commercial interests to water and graze their herds on public property. In 1882, the Johnson County War pitted the ranchers and the farmers against the cattle barons of the open range. T. A. Larson (1977) describes the circumstances of the conflict over water and grazing rights in his Wyoming, A Bicentennial History.

WESTERN TRANSPORTATION

The first wagon train headed for Oregon, a missionary party that included the first white women to come to the mountains, crossed the South Pass on the Oregon Trail on Independence Day in 1836. It brought up the rear of the annual pack train of the American Fur Company. In total, there were seventy some odd wagons and about four hundred horses and mules in a train that

stretched out for more than a mile in distance. Bernard DeVoto (1987) describes the spectacle in his Pulitzer Prize winning book, Across the Wide Missouri. In 1857 and 1858, Lieutenant Edward F. Beale tested the use of camels in the Southwest to carry the mail. C. Briggs (1983) describes the performance of the animals in Quarterdeck and Saddlehorn. In 1846, thirteen-year-old Virginia Reed and her family joined the ill-fated Donner-Reed party on their way to California. To survive, the party began eating one another. Virginia Reed gnawed on the bones of her dog. Others gnawed on the bones of the human dead. Her experiences are recorded in Across the Plains in the Donner Party (Reed 1966).

In 1849, a wagon train of settlers and gold seekers left Salt Lake City bound for Los Angeles. Some distance out, a group looking for a shorter and quicker route broke off from the rest and changed directions. Their plight gave Death Valley its name. William Lewis Manly, a survivor, tells the story in Death Valley in '49 (Manly 1982). In 1860, world traveler Raphael Pumpelly boarded a Butterfield stage in Missouri for a trip to Tucson, Arizona. The trip meant sixteen days of continuous travel for the eight men and one woman on board. As there was room inside for only sixteen of the eighteen legs, each side of the stage was graced by an extended foot. Pumpelly (1870) describes the trip in his Across America and Asia. William Miles and Parker H. French first met in 1851 when Miles decided to join a California-bound wagon train being organized by French. French got the group to Texas but then took off with their money and their mules. Miles (1965) describes the swindle in his Journal of the Sufferings and Hardships of Captain Parker H. French's Overland Expedition to California. In 1877, members of a sightseeing group hired George Cowan to be their guide through the Yellowstone Valley. Cowan's luck was running short that year. Indians captured him, robbed him, and then shot him in the leg and in the back. He managed to crawl away, but was then caught up in a forest fire. His friends rescued him. They loaded him up into the back of a wagon, but then, on the way home, the wagon wrecked itself on a hillside when it failed to make a curve in the road. H. M. Chittenden (1895) describes the outcome in The Yellowstone National Park: Historical and Descriptive.

In 1860, Sir Richard Francis Burton, the famed travel writer, journeyed by stagecoach from St. Joseph, Missouri, to San Francisco, California, for $175. He describes the best way to make the trip in The City of the Saints (Burton 1971). In the 1860s, Abraham Lincoln asked the Connecticut attorney Joseph P. Allyn if he would be willing to serve on the Arizona Territorial Supreme Court. Allyn answered in the affirmative. In The Arizona of Joseph Pratt Allyn, Allyn (1974) describes, in a letter home, his plans to ride two hundred miles across the desert by horseback. In 1866, James Rusling boarded a steamboat for travel down the Columbia River. Swift waters and other obstructions along the way made alternating between boat and train a necessity. He describes the trip in Across America (Rusling 1983). On May 10, 1869, a thousand people gathered at Promontory Point, Utah, to celebrate the completion of the nation's first transcontinental railroad. Theodore H. Hittell (1885) describes the scene in History of California.

In an 1872 travel book, California: For Health, Pleasure, and Residence, Charles Nordhoff (1872) describes the nature and essential character of the Chinese laborers hired to build the railroads. He states that the Chinese are some of the best track layers in the world. They learn all parts of the operation quickly. They never drink, fight, or strike, but will gamble if given the opportunity. The Rawhide Railroad ran on wooden rails wrapped in rawhide. Wolves, one winter, desperate for food, dug out and ate the entire length of the track from Walla Walla to Wallula, Washington. George Estes (1971) describes the scene in The Rawhide Railroad. The Pony Express mail line ran from St. Joseph, Missouri, to San Francisco, California. The scheduled time for the run was ten days. To do the work, the express required five hundred horses, two hundred stations, and three hundred men. Mail charges were five dollars for each half ounce. One of the proprietors Alexander Majors describes the logistics of the operation in Seventy Years on the Frontier (Majors 1989).

THE UNITED STATES MILITARY

In December 1835, at the opening of the Texas war for independence, a detachment of Texas volunteers drove a Mexican force from San Antonio and occupied the Alamo. On February 23, 1836, a Mexican army, numbering about four thousand and commanded by General Santa Anna, arrived and began a siege of the Alamo. The defending force was a small body of about two hundred commanded by James Bowie and William B. Travis and including Davy Crockett. On March 6, the invaders stormed the Alamo, killing the last defenders. William B. Travis on the second day of the siege wrote a letter to fellow Texans. A. G. Adair (1957) describes the letter's plea for help in Heroes of the Alamo. In 1861, Confederate troops from Texas moved into New Mexico, seizing Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Union resistance was greater at Glorieta and Confederate forces were forced to withdraw. One evening, James "Paddy" Graydon, a Union soldier of no small repute, loaded a dozen howitzer shells into two boxes. After strapping the boxes to the backs of two old mules, Paddy and cohorts headed for the enemy's camp. Just short of the line, they lighted the fuses, headed the mules forward, and ran for cover. On looking back, they were horrified to see the mules. Instead of running forward, the mules had turned around and were now running back toward them. Luckily, Paddy and company survived. A similar fate was not in the cards for the mules. Martin Hardwick Hall (1960) describes the scene in Sibley's New Mexico Campaign.

On June 25, 1876, General George A. Custer sent his last letter home. He assured his wife that he was well and that there was no need for her to worry. In some lighter talk, he described his Crow scouts as magnificently looking men. They were handsome, jolly, and sportive and nothing like the stereotype of the "gloomy, silent red-man." On July 5th, news of the disaster at the Little Big Horn reached his wife. She describes the moment in Boots and Saddles (Custer 1996). The Custer letters themselves are in The Custer Story: The Life and

Letters of George A. Custer and His Wife Elizabeth (Custer 1994).

Many of the firsthand accounts and other texts of historical value and significance from and about the social history of the American West are the diaries, news dispatches, travelogues, memoirs, letters, and government reports of their era. This has been but a short list of titles. A short description of some aspect of their relevancy to the western experience was included for the purpose of clarification. Interested students can and should pursue these and other topics at greater length in some other manner. Papers and projects are a plausible follow-up.

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